

8th January 2021

Beware

**“Pandora’s box, whence flew dispersed
All the dire mischiefs which mankind have cursed.”**

James Bland Burges, The Dragon Knight

In the ancient mythology of the Greeks, there’s the story of how the gods came to create Pandora and why the gift given to her by Zeus, the king of the gods, ultimately ends the Golden Age of humanity. In today’s parlance, it’s come to symbolise any source of great and unexpected troubles.

When Prometheus stole fire from heaven, Zeus took vengeance by presenting Pandora to Prometheus' brother, Epimetheus. Pandora was a nasty piece of work, described by one commentator as “a curse on humankind”. As a wedding present, Zeus gave Pandora a box (a jar, in some accounts) which she was warned never to open. But because of her greedy curiosity, she lifted the lid on it and out flew every horrible thing known to humanity – greed, envy, hatred, pain, disease, hunger, poverty, war and death. All of life’s miseries had been let out into the world.

We know that the modern idiom, "to open Pandora's Box", is to start something that will cause many unforeseen problems. So we have to beware. Beware of arrogant self-centredness. Beware of an uncaring disregard for others. Beware of ignorance or dismissing the consequences. Beware of an insatiable desire always to be the one in control. Beware of allowing all kinds of evil to escape to do untold damage because one person wants their own way. Beware of opening Pandora’s Box.

On Wednesday we witnessed unprecedented events in the Capitol in Washington DC, the home of democracy and good governance. What we saw was destructive of all we hold to be right and good. A Pandora’s Box had been opened and horrible things let loose. But, think on this ...

When the horrors were released from her box, Pandora slammed the lid down. The only thing remaining inside the box was hope. Ever since, the Greek myths tell us, humans have been able to keep this hope safe in order to survive the wickedness that Pandora had let out. Let’s hold on to that hope today. For it looks like it’s needed more than ever before.

A prayer for today

When horror is let loose, let me hold on to the preciousness of hope. Amen

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